IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend Claims 1, 2, 3, 4 to 13, 15 to 17 and 20 as shown below.

Please cancel Claim 18 without prejudice or disclaimer of subject matter. The claims, as

currently pending in the application, read as follows:

1.   (Currently Amended)   An image display method for displaying a

plurality of images of a prescribed combination in one of image layout formats of a

plurality of types, comprising:

a frequency storage step of storing frequency of use for each of the image

layout formats, wherein [[the]] each of the image layout formats indicates a combination of

includes a plurality of image display positions, and the frequency of use is different

according to a combination of types of images each of the image layout formats depends on

the type of image displayed at each position of the plurality of image display positions;

a setting step of setting one of the image layout formats, which is used in

displaying the prescribed combination of images, based upon the frequencies of use that

have been stored; and

a display step of displaying the prescribed combination of images each

image at corresponding positions, which are defined by each type of the images, of the

plurality of image display positions of the image layout format set in the setting step on a

display in the one of the image layout formats that has been set.

2.   (Currently Amended)   The method according to claim 1, wherein

said frequency storage step stores the frequency of use in association with each of a

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plurality of observers, and said setting step sets the one of the image layout formats based upon the frequencies of use and an observer.

3.   (Currently Amended)   The method according to claim 1, wherein said setting step sets, for every observer, an image layout format having the highest frequency of use as an image layout format used to display the ~~prescribed combination~~ plurality of images.

4.   (Currently Amended)   The method according to claim 1, wherein ~~said frequency storage step counts~~ the frequency of use of an image layout format is updated at a timing at which the ~~prescribed combination~~ plurality of images is displayed in the image layout format.

5.   (Currently Amended)   The method according to claim 1, wherein ~~said frequency storage step counts~~ the frequency of use of an image layout format is updated at a timing at which the image layout format is changed.

6.   (Currently Amended)   The method according to claim 1, wherein ~~said frequency storage step counts~~ the frequency of use of an image layout format, which is used in displaying the ~~prescribed combination~~ plurality of images, is updated at a timing at which said display step ends.

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7. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein ~~said frequency storage step counts~~ the frequency of use of an image layout format, which is used in displaying the ~~prescribed combination~~ plurality of images, is updated at a timing at which an observer performs an operation for ~~counting~~ updating the frequency of use ~~of the image layout format~~.

8. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein said frequency storage step stores collectively the frequencies of use of the image layout formats, which have been used for displaying the ~~prescribed combination~~ plurality of images for a plurality of observers, without distinguishing among the plurality of observers.

9. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the plurality of images ~~of a prescribed combination~~ are medical images[[,]] and the ~~prescribed combination is~~ a combination of images of the same type of examination.

10. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the plurality of images ~~of a prescribed combination~~ are medical images, ~~the prescribed combination is~~ and a combination of images of a plurality of different types of examination, and said setting step sets an image layout format based upon the ~~highest~~ frequency of use ~~from among frequencies of use of image layout formats of images of each~~ corresponding to a type of examination of the plurality of images.

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11.   (Currently Amended)   The method according to claim 1, ~~wherein when~~ further comprising:

a number setting step of setting the number of frequencies of use capable of being stored ~~has been set in advance, and images have been displayed in a new image layout format, said frequency storage step excludes:~~ and

an exclusion step of excluding the image layout format having the lowest frequency of use when the total number of frequencies of use exceeds the number set in the number setting step by adding a frequency of use of a ~~and adds on the frequency of use of the~~ new image layout format.

12.   (Currently Amended)   The method according to claim 11, wherein when the number is set to one, [[of]] the ranks of the frequency of ~~use is one~~ all image layout formats are treated as equal.

13.   (Currently Amended)   The method according to claim 1, ~~wherein in addition to display of images,~~ further comprising a layout format display step of displaying a display of [[an]] image layout ~~format~~ formats for notifying of the one of the image layout formats that has currently been set ~~is presented in said display step.~~

14.   (Previously Presented)   The method according to claim 13, further comprising an image layout format change step of changing the image layout format of the images currently being displayed on the display.

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15. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 14, ~~further comprising a priority change step of changing a priority corresponding to the frequency of use;~~ wherein ~~if the priority has been changed,~~ the display of image layout ~~format~~ <u>formats</u> is changed ~~in linked fashion in said display step~~ in response to an operation for changing the ~~priority~~ <u>image layout format</u>.

16. (Currently Amended) An image display apparatus comprising:

a display for displaying images;

a layout storage unit for storing a plurality of image layout formats, wherein each of the plurality of image layout formats ~~indicates a combination of~~ <u>includes</u> a plurality of image display positions;

a layout setting unit for setting one of the plurality of image layout formats on said display; [[and]]

<u>a display control unit for controlling to display on the display each image at corresponding positions, which are defined by each type of the images, of the plurality of image display positions of the image layout format set by said layout setting unit; and</u>

a frequency storage unit for storing frequency of use for the each of the plurality of image layout formats, wherein ~~the frequency of use is different according to a combination of types of images~~ <u>each of the image layout formats depends on the type of image</u> displayed at <u>each position of</u> the plurality of image display positions,

wherein said layout setting unit sets an image layout format based upon the frequencies of use.

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17.   (Currently Amended)   A computer-executable program stored on a computer-readable medium having program code for causing a computer to execute an image display method for displaying a plurality of images of a prescribed combination in one of image layout formats of a plurality of types, said program comprising:

code for implementing a frequency storage step of storing frequency of use for each of the image layout formats, wherein [[the]] each of the image layout formats indicates a combination of includes a plurality of image display positions, and the frequency of use is different according to a combination of types of images each of the image layout formats depends on the type of image displayed at each position of the plurality of image display positions;

code for implementing a setting step of setting one of the image layout formats, which is used in displaying the prescribed combination of images, based upon the frequencies of use that have been stored; and

code for implementing a display step of displaying the prescribed combination of images each image at corresponding positions, which are defined by each type of the images, of the plurality of image display positions of the image layout format set in the setting step on a display in the one of the image layout formats that has been set.

18.   (Cancelled).

19.   (Previously Presented)   The apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said layout setting unit further sets a plurality of buttons, each indicating one of the plurality of image layout formats, on said display.

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20.   (Currently Amended)   The apparatus according to claim [[16]] 19,

further comprising a selection unit for selecting one of [[a]] the plurality of buttons,

wherein the ~~examination types; wherein said layout setting unit sets the one of the plurality~~

of image layout format used to display the images is changed ~~formats~~ in response to the

selection by said selection unit.